

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Previously Presented) A starter for engines, comprising:  
an electromagnetic switch;  
a pinion gear movable along an axial direction; and  
a shift lever for driving the pinion gear by the electromagnetic switch, the shift lever including a plurality of sheets of resilient leaf springs inclinedly supported at a middle portion thereof and having contact portions at both ends thereof,

wherein the drive spring includes a slit end portion in which gaps are formed among the respective leaf springs at least at one of the contact portions and the respective leaf springs include the contact portions having differences of distal end positions longer than thickness of the respective leaf springs contiguous to each other and brought into contact with an opposing member at positions different from each other.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Original) The starter as in Claim 1, wherein the contact portions has curved faces.

4. (Canceled)